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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7641
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UNCLAS DAKAR 000427

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STATE FOR S/S-O, AF, AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL/AE AND INR/AA
PARIS FOR POL - D'ELIA

REF: DAKAR 0426

E.O.12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SENEGAL: ELECTION SITREP 2, 22:00 GMT

¶1. SUMMARY: Turnout in Senegal's presidential election remains heavy; so the Government extended voting until 23:00 GMT, with many people voting by candlelight. Disorganization deterred an unknown number of Senegalese from casting their ballots. Thousands of potential voters had still not received or picked up their voter cards by late on Sunday. There were multiple allegations of party officials withholding voter cards or paying individuals not to vote. Casamance rebels deterred others from voting either because of February 24 attacks or threats. Touba appears to have experienced the greatest problems, with 80 polling stations not opening until noon and voters there being unsure of their polling stations, forcing them to stand in long lines more than once. Some voters threw away all of their 15 ballots, and others put their ballots in envelopes in such a way that their votes were not secret. Some of the "indelible" ink could be washed off, but there was little evidence of multiple voting. Very preliminary results show President Abdoulaye Wade in the lead. END SUMMARY.

SECURITY

¶2. Angry voters dismayed by organizational problems protested peacefully in some of the Dakar suburbs or simply went home in disgust. Fistfights broke out in some places when polling stations closed with voters still in line.

¶3. A local radio station reported that the separatist Movement of Democratic Forces of the Casamance (MFDC) has threatened to kill those who vote, and that some Senegalese have crossed into The Gambia for safety. Other media reports indicate that at least two villages in the Casamance had not received replacement voting materials after a rebel attack on February 24.

TURNOUT

¶4. Many locations had hundreds of voters in line all day. Once in the polling places, voters took up to five minutes to complete the voting process, and some polling stations only utilized a single voting booth. Frustration was evident as some voters waited only to learn at the head of the lines, that they are registered at a different polling station in the same location. The long lines continued both at prefectures (for voters waiting to pick up their voter identification cards) and at the polls themselves.

¶5. Due to heavy turnout and thousands of people still in line at many polling stations at the planned closing time of 18:00 GMT, the Ministry of Interior extended voting hours until 23:00. Not all election commission officials received word of the extensions though, and some polls closed with long lines of voters not having cast their ballots. Senior Minister of Justice Cheikh Tidiane Sy forced one St. Louis polling station that had closed to reopen. Many locations have hundreds of voters in line.

¶6. Touba, the Mouride religious capital, appears to have experienced the greatest problems, with 80 polling places not

opening until noon GMT and voters there being unsure of their polling stations. For all intents and purposes, this is the first time that residents of Touba have gone to the polls, which may explain the disorganization.

VERY PRELIMINARY RESULTS

17. Mission observers and media report that with just 37,000 votes counted, President Wade is leading; former Prime Minister Idrissa Seck is in second; Socialist Party leader Ousmane Tanor Dieng is in third; and former Prime Minister Moustapha Niasse is in fourth. Embassy cautions against using this very small sample to conclude that President Wade will win or whether a second round will be necessary.

JACOBS